Conversion

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Conversion

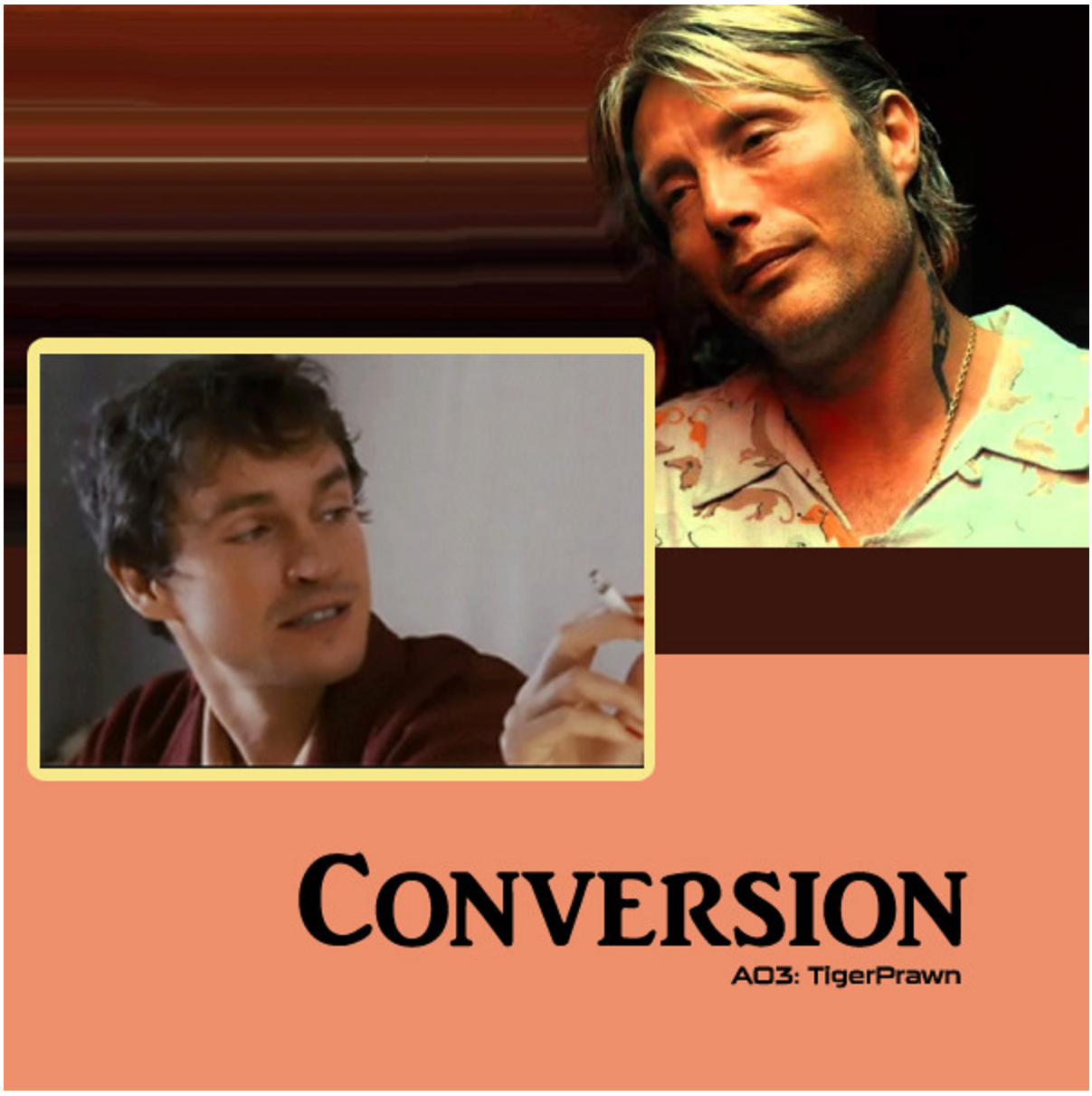
by TigerPrawn

Summary

Nigel and Buddy's developing friendship is interrupted when Buddy is sent to a conversion centre.

Some EveningDogs for this month's #RareMeat - Buddy Week

Chapter 1



Nigel watched as Lila Wittenborn wandered along the street with her friends. Nigel took a drag on his cigarette before flicking it on the floor and pushing off from the wall he was leaning against.

He'd been waiting to see her around all week, and he wasn't going to let this opportunity pass.

"Hey, Wittenborn." Nigel called out, taking a casual slouch of a walk towards her. Her friend's faces turned up in sneers, as most of the kids at school looked at him. But Lila's was worried. That was what told him there definitely was something going the fuck on.

All the girls stopped and she hesitated a moment before continuing towards him, looking nervous. Which was fair. Nigel was a little older, intimidating and he knew it. "Alright,

gorgeous. Where's Buddy?"

"Nigel, it's…" She looked worried. Not that he hadn't seen that look before, back when she thought he was bullying her brother. The opposite was true, he'd stepped in when the kid was being beat up after school one day. He worked in the auto shop across from the school and it had become a safe haven for Buddy to come sit and do his school work whilst no one dared come near.

In fact he was far from bullying Buddy.

Nigel knew he should feel bad about it, but truth was, the more time they spent together, the more Nigel was attracted to the kid. It wasn't like there was a massive age difference, Nigel had dropped out of school and started working on motors to keep a roof over his head after his foster parents kicked him out. Buddy was in his final year, so actually he was a little under three years older than Buddy.

Even so, he just felt like a dirty old man for thinking about Buddy like that. Or, maybe it was more that Buddy made him feel like a dirty old man by the way he flirted, the way he looked at Nigel.

The kid had been stopping by the shop for months, sitting there doing his homework whilst Nigel worked overtime fixing the engines or doing oil changes. It got so that Nigel would look up in expectation when the school let out, knowing that he would shortly be making his way across the street, flanked by bullies who now wouldn't dare lay a hand on him. And now Buddy hadn't been in school for two weeks and it wasn't like there were mutual friends he could ask. He only knew Lila from the times she'd dropped by when Buddy had first started hanging out. She'd try and get him to go home, something Buddy had been reluctant to do.

"Lila, where the fuck is Buddy?" He growled, trying not to frighten her too much, but just enough.

"It's a family matter," She said so quietly that he barely heard. She looked upset, like she was about to start fucking crying. And then she was gone. He turned to watch her running off down to the street with her friends going after her.

"Well this is fucking weird." Nigel muttered before pulling his cigarettes out of his top pocket and lighting one. Not any closer to knowing where his study Buddy had gone.

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"Got what you wanted," Darko's voice came out of the dark corner as Nigel let himself into his shitty little apartment. Nigel flicked on the light, revealing his friend and sometimes accomplice, Darko, sat in the one beat up old chair next to the bed.

"About fucking time," Nigel replied, throwing his keys on the shelf next to the door. It had been almost two weeks since he'd asked Darko to look into what had happened with Buddy. And in that time Buddy still hadn't returned.

It had been a hard ask, having to reveal a lot more of himself than he had intended. Only made easier by the fact that Darko had stopped him and reassured him that he knew he was a fag and that he didn't give a fuck. He assumed that he was fucking Buddy, though he'd never laid a hand on the kid. Didn't mean he didn't feel something for him though. When Buddy stopped dropping by Nigel had tried to shrug it off, but as the days passed he'd become worried. More than that, he'd pined. He missed the kid and he was concerned about him. He had a strong urge to find him and hold him.

Nigel kept playing over and over in his mind all the times that Buddy had made comments or stood so close. All the times that Nigel *knew* that Buddy liked boys in that same way he liked boys but had never discussed it. Never acted on it despite how close they had become over hours of talking in the workshop.

Darko clearing his throat brought Nigel back from his thoughts, buzzing with nervous anticipation of what he might have found out.

Darko mainly kept to drug dealing, but he knew a lot of people with a lot of various skills. He often had someone snooping here or there, helping facilitate a big robbery and the like. So it was Darko he'd turned to in order to find out where Buddy had gone. Darko who had been there when his foster family kicked him out. Got him into dealing and yet stood by him when Nigel wanted to go straight and started training as a mechanic.

Nigel was pretty sure something fucked up was going on with Buddy, like military school. Either way Buddy's parents for sure sent him away for being who he was. Or maybe just suspected the truth. The truth that was so fucking obvious to Nigel when Buddy coyly flirted with him and spent much more than was truly necessary looking at his ass.

"Military school? Boarding school?" Nigel asked.

Darko huffed out a chuckle and shook his head. "Sorry, brother, looks like your little fuck toy is in trouble at home."

Nigel sneered but didn't bother to correct Darko. Wasn't like he hadn't thought about being buried balls deep inside Buddy often enough for the comment to be unfounded.

Darko held out the envelope and Nigel practically snatched it up and ripped it open, spilling the photos onto the floor.

Nigel picked them up and sat on the edge of his bed to flick through them.

Buddy, looking sad, distant. He looked like he'd lost weight. He looked like a fucking shadow.

"Where is this?" Nigel asked.

Darko made a motion to indicate he kept going, so he did. The photos grew more distant and it was clear they had been taken through a fence. A building in the background as a group of forlorn teens and young adults ate lunch outside.

Nigel frowned and then there was a photo of the front gate notice.

Residential Therapeutic Centre

“What the fuck is that?” Nigel asked, a nagging fear at the back of his mind.

“Fucking conversion therapy,” Darko growled. “I don’t get the obsession of some people. Why do they care where someone wants to stick their dick? Fucking churches, that’s what it is.”

Darko cut himself off before starting a rant that Nigel had heard many times before. One that stemmed from Darko’s childhood in a strictly religious family and a church that supported the abuse they could justify. Beating the devil out of him, Darko had told him. Not that it fucking worked at all, Darko would laugh, but the pain in his eyes he could never hide.

“Fuck,” Nigel spat and threw the photos onto the floor. “What the fuck?” He looked to Darko for answers.

“Had my boys do a little investigating. Looks like the kid’s parents didn't like the way he was made. They turned up some records in his dad’s name, signing him into the centre.”

Nigel shook his head, “Fuck. This is…” He wanted to ask how parents could be so cruel but he’d been rejected by both his biological family and foster family, so it wasn’t like he didn’t know this shit. Just the same as Darko.

Nigel took a calming breath and then looked up to Darko. “How do I get him out?”

Darko smiled.

*

Buddy tried not to cry.

It would be worse if he cried. They were already threatening him with more electro-therapy if he didn’t show response to the group therapy.

He couldn’t have been at the centre a month yet, and yet it felt like a lifetime. One in which he was an outcast to his family, worse than a disappointment. Reviled and disgusting.

When his dad had first asked him to pack and bag and meet him in the car, Buddy had feared the worst. A few times they had threatened him with being admitted to a sanitarium to stop his drinking. It was too much, he was too much. He’d been told time and again. And he knew it.

He didn’t want to drink as much as he did. He hated the sickness and aches that came with it. But some days, most days, it felt like the only way to blot out the pain of his existence, of being unable to acknowledge who he was.

Buddy had been surprised at the thought of going to rehabilitation, because he had been so much better. For months, since he’d become friends with Nigel. Drinking less, studying

harder. And despite Lila's misgivings, his parents seemed to appreciate that he was less underfoot than usual and didn't much care why that was.

Just the thought of Nigel made his guts twist, remembering how weeks earlier the thought of him made Buddy feel light and happy.

He had expected the sanitarium. Not this place.

Buddy had heard of places like this. He had been taunted by other kids at school that he'd end up somewhere like this, until Nigel had chased them off.

The first week, he had resisted hard. Not truly understanding what they might do to him, until they did it. When he wouldn't cooperate after three days of asking for them to call his father, the doctor had come to see him. He had prescribed a treatment of electro-therapy.

The first and only session had been enough to make Buddy try. He felt detached from his body half the time, like he was watching himself and not really there. Just going through the motions and doing as they said. Thing was, despite that it was impossible for him to not be gay. He knew he shouldn't be, and he ended up in a group of the more difficult residents. Some like him, that were going through the motions but nothing changed. Others who actively resisted, and then those that actively wanted to not be gay, but were unable to change.

He sobbed again, his heart and mind torn. He wanted to get out, he wanted to be safe with Nigel again. But the only way to get out was to get better. To no longer be a homosexual.

Even the word hurt him to think. The evilness of it and every act associated with it, they had drummed into them all was evil. Disgusting. They were disgusting. They had no worth. And never would until they were cured of their deviancy.

Buddy clapped his hand over his mouth to stop the pained wail that wanted to escape. When he was younger his father had often called him a sissy. And he'd not really known for years what the word meant. And then he did and should have stood up to his father and denied it, but it was difficult to deny the truth in it.

He'd been stupid, he realised now. He should have taken his father's attitude a lot more seriously. But falling in love with Nigel had made him reckless. Oh, how he regretted the times he'd excitedly chattered about his new friend over dinner.

His father's final words before leaving him at the centre were gruff. A request to get better that seemed almost as though he cared, and then the threat. "If you don't come back home with your ideas bucked up, we'll have to see about getting the police after that lad at the garage. Corrupting a minor, sodomy, disgusting."

Buddy had been too shocked and scared to reply that they had never even kissed, that he'd never done anything like that with anyone. His fear for Nigel had stopped him protesting as his father walked out the door and left him.

“Wittenborn!” The voice was harsh, the permanent anger and disgust that all the staff carried with them. “Group is starting.”

He was pulled roughly to his feet and dragged out to the hallway, already knowing that he’d receive a punishment. As much for crying and being womanly in that way as for being late.

A beating, most likely. But the threat of electo-therapy hung over him every day. And he was still haunted by the second meeting he had with the doctor who suggested that if he had not improved within their expected time frame, they might need to consider chemical castration.

Buddy didn’t struggle against the hands that pulled him to group therapy. There was no point.

*

“Wittenborn, Ibanescu.” The voice barked and Buddy looked up to Gabi who looked equally as miserable as he did.

Had they matched them on purpose? They seemed to be two of the small group of eight, that were still not progressing. Gabi very aggressively resisting, Buddy resisting by default because there was nothing else he could do.

How could he change? As much as they tried, as much as he started to fear who he was and knew that he shouldn’t be gay, how could he just stop loving Nigel?

The other three couples were paired off, smiling at each other and all trying so hard to change who they were to who their parents wanted them to be.

And Buddy knew he should be doing the same.

Gabi stood abruptly from her chair and nearly knocked it over in the process, striding across the small hall to Buddy and pulling him up out of his own chair. The others had all already begun dancing as the record played.

He wondered if some of these others would go home and stay in touch, maybe even marry? Live a lie of happily ever after?

Gabi pulled his hand to her waist and then the rest was on auto-pilot, remembering the dinner dances at his parent’s house. He remembered the ones when he was a boy and unable to attend. And yet he’d sneak out and meet with his friend Harris and they would watch through the window, huddled together for warmth.

His first love. He knew that, in that childishly innocent way. As much as he knew he should be fighting these thoughts and feelings if he was ever going to be allowed to leave.

“Don’t let it get to you,” Gabi practically growled next to his ear as they started to move to the gentle tune.

Buddy looked at her questioningly.

“I understand. We’re not like the others. You have someone don’t you? That’s why they are having to try so hard with you. I do too, Ann. She’s waiting for me. They won’t break me. They can’t.”

Buddy swallowed, astonished but bolstered by her quiet words that only he could hear over the music.

“I don’t…” He started but she cocked her head and gave him a sly grin. Then he nodded. He didn’t have Nigel, not really. But he wished, so dearly he wished.

“Just play along with them, we’ll get through this if we work together.” Gabi reassured, her eyes darting around to make sure no one else could hear. “They made a mistake putting us together. More fool them.”

She gave him a soft and encouraging smile that he couldn’t help but return.

“Oh, very nice Buddy. Yes, you do make a lovely couple.” The praise from the matron was unexpected, he’d had nothing but harsh words spoken to him since his arrival.

Gabi turned them so her back was to the staff and she gave him a wink. He smiled again, understanding. Yes, they could do this. They could pretend together.

“Thank you,” He said quietly.

Gabi smiled.

*

“Mister Wittenborn, isn’t it?” Nigel asked, trying not to growl the words, as hard as he was trying not to drag the man out of his car by the collar.

It was the night of some school dance and he had watched and waited as the parents had arrived to collect their kids.

“Nigel, don’t.” Lila warned from the passenger seat she had just slid into, a couple of her friends in the back getting rides home.

“I’m friends with your son, I was just wondering where he’s got to recently.” Nigel clenched his jaw and didn’t even attempt to make it a question. The fact that the man glared at him but didn’t so much as squirm filled him with rage.

“*Friends*,” Wittenborn spat with a sneer. “Don’t come near me or my family again or I’ll report you to the police.”

Nigel held up his hands and backed away from the car, a grin on his face as the man sped away.

But now he knew who Wittenborn was. What he looked like.

*

They lay out on the lawn, they were allowed out now.

Buddy had gone from threats of electro-therapy to enjoying the sunshine with his new friend in less than two weeks. How easily and readily the staff had believed that by meeting each other Gabi and Buddy were on their way to be totally cured of the deviancy. Buddy and Gabi played along at every session, and all the time in between.

Of course, stretching out on the grace hand in hand, they put on a good show of it. As far as the staff at the centre were concerned, theirs was a tentative and chaste romance, the sort that filled the movie theatres and perfectly appropriate. Why would they question it?

Especially as they truly did get along. They enjoyed each other's company and laughed with each other. When left alone in the sunshine they put up the appearance of young love from a distance, but had anyone cared to stroll closer, they'd hear them talking of each other's loves.

Ann sounded wonderful. The sort of person Buddy was sure his sister would like and befriend. He couldn't help but feel sorry for Lila, caught in the middle with this. For years he had entrusted the secrets of his heart to her, and never had she said anything to their parents. Only now and then telling him that he should be careful.

"Stop frowning." Gabi tugged his hand as she said it and he shook his head, pulling the smile back on.

"Sorry." He whispered.

"Thinking about Nigel?" Her voice was barely a whisper too, despite the fact that the staff were all up on the terrace or indoors. They couldn't get complacent.

He shook his head, "My sister actually." He let out a sigh and tried not to let his frown return. "I hope she's okay."

He stopped there. Gabi had already revealed her own past, that she'd lost her parents to a fire and been raised by concerned relatives, so concerned that they'd sent her here when they had caught her in a state of undress with Ann. He didn't want to continue down that line of conversation knowing it might cause her pain to discuss family.

"You're going to New York?" He asked, she had already told him but he knew it was a subject that made her smile.

"Yeah, Ann has a place in the village. Once I'm out I'll head there. We'll make our own way."

Buddy smiled and nodded. What would he do, he wondered.

As close as he and Nigel were, he had no idea of the man's feelings for him. Wishful thinking made him hope that there were feelings there. But what if Nigel had only ever considered him something of a little brother? The way Harris had?

He would make it through this and get out but then… What if Nigel didn't want him?

Would life be worth living? After all this?

Buddy took in a shuddering breath, his mind dangerously close to something that seemed inevitable that he didn't want to acknowledge. What if he had to live this way forever? Forever would have to be short.

"Stop." Gabi said again and Buddy sighed.

"That time I was thinking about Nigel," He told her, unable to stop his smile in response to her knowing one.

"I know." She grinned.

*

It wasn't late, but it was cloudy.

Not inclement weather, but clouds that had been white and fluffy during the day were now casting long shadows as the sky darkened.

It was the best chance he was going to get, Nigel realised, with the promise of only more bright summer nights ahead of them.

Nigel watched as Wittenborn left his office and got into his car. He'd been following the man on and off for a week or so, and his routine was pretty much the same every weekday.

Nigel clenched his jaw and jogged across the road before he had a chance to even start the engine. The car roared into life as Nigel yanked open the passenger door and slid in.

"Drive." He growled at the startled man. "I said drive!" Nigel menaced, his hand in his pocket on the small wrench he had in there that he hoped would be taken for something more deadly.

"You-" Wittenborn started, his face red, but Nigel shook his head.

"You want me to use this?"

Wittenborn's forehead was already a little clammy with sweat from the fear Nigel had sent through him. He hesitated only a moment before putting the car into gear and pulling away from the curb. His hands shook on the wheel.

"I'm not taking you to my home," Wittenborn protested, weakly.

Nigel chuckled, "You sure as fuck are not. You're taking me to Buddy."

The momentary surprise on Wittenborn's face was replaced almost immediately with disgust.

"So you have been fucking my sissy of a son, have you."

Not a question and it took everything in Nigel not to smash the guy's head down into the steering wheel. Maybe he would once he got to where he was going.

"Just drive," Nigel hissed through his teeth. "And don't be fucking stupid or I'll pull the trigger faster than you can fucking blink."

At that Wittenborn, a coward if ever Nigel had seen one, became quiet and focused on the road, only looking across with a slight sneer when Nigel pulled out his cigarettes and lit one. He blew the smoke in Wittenborn's face.

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The drive was blessedly uneventful as it turned out that Wittenborn truly was a coward of high proportions. They even passed a parked cop car at one point and he didn't even try to signal them in any way.

It wasn't until they started to pull up to the front gates of the centre that Wittenborn asked, scathingly.

"So what's your big idea?"

"You're going to get us in pops." He indicated with the hidden wrench. "Tell the nice man at the gate that you've come for a visit. I'm an old friend of the family along for the ride."

They were level with the gate house when Nigel finished and Wittenborn wound down his window.

"Good evening," He tried his best to sleep pleasant. "I'm Charles Wittenborn, my son is a resident here. I'd like to see him."

"There are no visitors allowed at-" The guard started

"What's that?" Nigel asked, leaning over Wittenborn to glare out the window. "Do you know how fucking much money my friend here is paying to keep his faggot son locked up in this place, and you have the nerve to say he can't see him whenever the fuck he likes?"

"Sir, it's the rules-"

"This is bullshit," Nigel fumed, and started to open the car door.

"Wait, um… I'll have to call through to-"

"You fucking do that sunshine, and in the meantime open the gate and the man in charge can just meet us at the door." Nigel had long ago perfected the ability to look threatening in an amiable way.

The guard nodded and unlocked the gate, letting them pass through before retreating back inside to no doubt call whoever the fuck he needed to call.

“So many fucking spineless men, all willing to shout sissy and fag, but no balls when it comes to it.” Nigel grumbled as Wittenborn drove slowly towards the building.

“What now? You know they will have security inside. You might as well give up now, the police are probably already on their way after that little stunt.”

Nigel chuckled and shook his head, “You really haven’t been paying attention if you think the fucking police are enough to come between me and your son.”

Wittenborn, unexpectedly, barked a laugh at that and shook his head. “You seem to be under the impression that he’s just sat in there waiting for you to rescue him. Won’t you be disappointed when you see he doesn’t want to leave with you. Not when I have it on good authority that his treatment has been very successful and he’s even dating one of his fellow residents. We’ve all been looking forward to welcoming her over for dinner once they complete their residency.”

Nigel scowled as Wittenborn continued to laugh at him.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Nigel rescues Buddy.

The alarm startled Buddy and Gabi, and everyone else sat in the hall. It had been laid out to resemble a movie theatre and a Doris Day movie was being played through a projector.

It was date night.

But it looked like it was coming to an abrupt end as the alarm continued and staff could be heard running down the hallway. Their own monitor rushing out to join the bustle without a word.

“A fire?” One of the other guys asked, but it was Gabi who was on her feet first and went to look through the circular window in the door.

She looked back into the room with a frown, surveying them before saying, “We’re all the troublemakers and we’re here. *And* we’re all being very good little robots for them, so it must be something external. Not an inmate.”

They all remained silent but it made sense. They weren’t the only group there, but they were the ones who had been the hardest to reach. He knew a couple of those in their group were only so cooperative now because of the electroshock therapy. He couldn’t imagine that any of the other groups would cause this ruckus.

“A new admission?” Buddy wondered aloud and there were a few murmurs and shrugs. Everyone, himself included, seemed on edge.

Suddenly the alarm cut off but they could still hear the running up and down the hallway.

Gabi startled back from the door and jogged back towards Buddy as it swung open and one of the staff stood in the doorway, face red with anger. Her eyes swung around the room until they found Buddy.

“Everyone to your rooms,” She barked, “Lights out in five minutes. Wittenborn come with me.”

Gabi shot him a glance and slipped her hand into his, giving it a squeeze.

Something was very wrong here. Maybe this was all some sort of set up to throw them off guard? Maybe they had known all along that he and Gabi were faking their affections? But even so, this seemed like an extraordinary response.

She clung to his hand as he stepped forward, and he desperately wanted to keep hold of her. Not just for the support but to make sure he knew she was okay. She was his best friend. His only friend aside from Nigel.

“To your room Ibanescu!” The woman growled and pulled out her nightstick.

Gabi squeezed his hand again, and he could feel the rage within her. She released him, and for a moment it seemed she was going to file out with everyone else and leave Buddy to his uncertain fate.

But instead she got up close and knocked the nightstick from the woman’s hand. Startled by the unexpected assault, the woman reached down for it whilst screaming orders at Gabi. But Gabi used the opportunity to knee the woman in the stomach and push her to the floor.

“Come on Buddy.” Gabi shot back at him, fire burning in her eyes. “This is our chance.”

It took a moment for Buddy to collect himself, as Gabi stepped on the woman’s hand and picked up the nightstick. Buddy was by her side as the door swung closed behind them.

In the hallway lights were flashing at each end, even though the sound of the alarm had been stopped.

“What the fuck is going on?” Gabi frowned as she practically dragged Buddy down the hall.

“I really wish I wasn’t sober right now,” Buddy grumbled, mostly to hide how scared he was.

It took him a moment to realise that Gabi was leading them towards the gardens, and away from the ruckus that seemed to be unfolding at the front of the building.

“I hid some stuff out here, I’ve been stealing from the kitchens when I’ve had a chance.” She explained as they ran, “I think we can get over the wall.”

Buddy recalled the barbed wires that sat atop the wall and wasn’t quite so sure. In other circumstances he wouldn’t have tried. He’d have just relaxed and waited it all out with the expectation that his father would resolve the whole thing with reputation, money or both.

But that Buddy had lived a lifetime ago. A young, entitled brat who didn’t exist any more. Couldn’t exist.

Not since meeting Nigel and realised that, whatever the future might bring, he couldn’t deny that part of himself any longer. Not since being here, in this place. Forced here by the very parents he had relied upon in the past to rescue him from his escapades.

It was the thought of Nigel that was the encouragement Buddy needed to pick up the pace.

They reached the doors to the garden, dark with clouds and the setting sun hidden behind the building. They pushed together but neither door moved.

“Locked,” Buddy stated the obvious.

“Fuck. We need keys, or…” Gabi looked around and saw the foldaway chair a little further down, currently abandoned by the hall monitor who must have joined the commotion. Gabi strode to it and brought it back with determination. “Move.” She growled at Buddy before swinging it at the window.

The glass cracked but didn’t shatter. Not on the first swing at least.

Gabi struck again with an almighty scream and the glass shattered.

Buddy watched in awe as she then used the sleeve of her sweater to push out the remaining glass shards that stood upright in the window.

“Come on,” She jerked her head to the window and then used the chair to climb up and out, landing on the other side with a crunch of glass under her feet.

Buddy stepped onto the chair and then-

“Stop!” A voice screamed down the hallway and then there were feet thundering towards him.

Whatever else was going on, they knew he and Gabi were escaping, and now they were after them.

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Nigel’s fist connected with Wittenborn’s face before he even considered stopping himself.

When the alarm had started, Nigel was pretty sure shit was about to hit the fan. Staff spilled out of the building and Wittenborn tried to explain what was happening as they both emerged from the car.

In all the commotion, whilst Wittenborn pointed fingers at Nigel and holding his bloodied nose, Nigel just kept asking over and over again for Buddy, but no one called the fucking cops.

Someone finally turned the fucking alarm off that clearly the overzealous matron had activated when she’d seen Wittenborn stumble from his car with blood gushing from his face. It looked worse than it was, noses always bled like a fucking geyser.

Lights were still flashing and finally, fucking finally, someone dressed in a nice suit rather than orderly outfits, ushered Wittenborn into the building with a call for calm.

No one seemed to know what the fuck to do with Nigel and he didn’t much care. He pushed through and made his way in too, to cries of protest.

“Just fucking tell me where Buddy is. We’re signing him out. Ask my friend Wittenborn there, he’ll tell you.” Nigel growled and no one made a move to get too close.

“That isn’t allowed, that isn’t how things are-” One of the orderly types started and Nigel wheeled on him and snarled.

“Do I look like I’m taking a fucking no for an answer?”

There was more chattering, more running. More people surrounding him but clearly too wary to get too close.

“Call the police,” someone finally said and attention was drawn to two of their number running off, presumably to do so.

Nigel took the opportunity to run himself.

He made a snap decision to head down the hallway away from the office looking parts. He figured it would take the cops at least twenty minutes to get to the place, unless they had someone already in the area.

He just had to risk it. Time was running out, he had to find Buddy.

As he pushed passed, two of the staff grabbed at him and he managed to shrug out of their grasp and run. He heard the whip of nightsticks being pulled and their footsteps behind him.

“Don’t fucking try it,” He called back over his shoulder and then burst through a set of double doors. There were a few young people dashing about, running back to their rooms from the looks of it. And for a moment up ahead, through another set of doors, he was sure he saw Buddy running away from him.

The moment’s lapse resulted in hands on him.

“I warned you,” Nigel growled as he swung around. One of them had hold of his arm, so he flexed it to draw the guy closer before smashing his head into the man’s nose. He heard the crack of the bone and then the howl of pain, a thud as the man went down.

Nigel carried on running, barrelling through the double doors and then he saw him.

“Stop!” Nigel cried out. Buddy ignored him, but the face of a young woman appeared at the smashed window he was exiting. “Buddy!”

At that, Buddy looked back over his shoulder. Elation spread across Buddy’s face.

And then he was tugged out of the window.

*

“It’s Nigel, stop. Wait.” Buddy tried to shrug from Gabi’s grasp.

“We have to keep moving,” She replied, single minded in her determination as she dragged him half way across the lawn.

He finally managed to tug free and she stopped, panting and glaring at him. “I don’t want to leave you here.”

“I want to go.” He agreed. “But, that was Nigel. This, whatever’s going on. It’s Nigel.”

Gabi blinked, and then tilted her head with a grin. “He’s come to rescue you.”

Buddy’s stomach swooped and his heart skipped a beat. Could that be it? Was there any other explanation?

“Buddy!”

Buddy swung around to see Nigel coming through the window.

“Nigel,” Buddy said quietly, reverently.

“Fuck,” Nigel exhaled the word and it carried across the quiet lawn as he ran to them.

“Nigel, wh-” Buddy started but then Nigel’s arms were around him and he was lifted off his feet. Nigel buried his face in the crook of Buddy’s neck and breathed him in, holding him tight around the middle. Buddy resisted the urge to circle his legs around Nigel, but slid his arms around the man’s neck and held him tight.

“We’re getting out of here,” Nigel growled the words and then pulled back. He set Buddy back down and cupped his face, looking him over for any sign of damage, and then he leaned down and pressed soft, dry lips to Buddy’s.

Buddy gasped, not even having a chance to kiss back before Nigel pulled away and looked over at Gabi.

“You the girlfriend?” Nigel raised a brow.

“Apparently my services are no longer required,” Gabi chuckled. “But we need to get the fuck out of here.”

Nigel nodded and took Buddy’s hand in his own. “I have a car, out the front. Come on.”

*

Nigel was trying not to shake. His whole fucking body was a live wire, with Buddy’s hand in his own and so close to… whatever the fuck the next bit was. Whatever came after them getting out of this fucking place.

He had known before coming here that this was it. What he was doing meant no going back. Technically he could be done for kidnapping a minor or some shit, he was sure. Two, by the looks of things. Which was a joke, considering Buddy had probably been tortured and all sorts in this place, but he’d be the one in the wrong.

He didn’t miss Buddy’s furtive glances at the girl. Clearly he was worried about her getting out just as he was himself.

“My father’s car.” Buddy suddenly stopped and then looked at Nigel, as they rounded the corner of the building.

They could see there was still something of a commotion at the open front doors. The gate was still open and the guard stood there, as though waiting for the cops to arrive.

“I made him bring me here,” Nigel explained and Buddy nodded. There was something unreadable in the kid’s expression and he wondered if he thought his dad had come to get him out.

They couldn’t focus on it then, they needed to get to the car before they were spotted or the cops arrived.

“Come on,” Nigel encouraged and loped along the side of the wall with them both in tow. Once they reached the edge of the building they stopped. They were going to have to make a run for it. Across the open lawn and driveway.

“Front doors are unlocked. Girl, you go first, jump over into the back, Buddy get in the passenger side, I’ll drive.” They all nodded and shook with fear and anxiety. They were so close.

“Now!” Nigel growled and the girl ran, her feet making noise as soon as they hit the gravel of the driveway. Nigel winced, and pushed Buddy to go, following immediately behind him.

By the time they reached the car they had been spotted.

Cries went up and people began to spill back out of the front doors, Buddy’s dad amongst them.

“Buddy!” He called out to them as Nigel reached the driver’s side. He opened the door and realised that Buddy stood there, looking at his father.

“Buddy, in the car.” Nigel encouraged.

“Buddy, don’t get in that car. Come home with me now or else… If you get in that car you are dead to us. Think of your mother and sister.” The words were cutting and cruel and Nigel wished he’d hit the man fucking harder when he’d had the chance.

Buddy sobbed and looked at Nigel before looking back at his dad.

“It isn’t a choice Buddy,” The girl in the back of the car spoke calmly and softly. “If you go home you can never be yourself. Please, Buddy…”

That jerked Buddy away from his father’s gaze. He sobbed again before finally saying, “Tell them I love them. I always will.”

And then he slid into the car.

Nigel got in and slammed his own door shut. There were people running at them now and he didn’t hesitate to turn the key and throw the car into reverse.

The engine choked slightly and for a heart stopping second he thought it might stall. But no, they sped back and the girl ducked down as he looked over his shoulder to see where he was

going.

The guard jumped aside as they sped out of the gates, the small ramp catching the car's undercarriage and sending up sparks.

Nigel braked, the car lurching and throwing them all about. He shifted gears and pulled away again, this time forwards, wheels screeching as he hit the gas and sent them speeding down the road.

"Where are we going?" Buddy asked, and Nigel realised he'd just worked it out too. He couldn't go home of course, but they couldn't stick around either. They had to leave, get as far away as possible to ensure that they were never found by the police or Buddy's family.

They needed to start a whole new life, together.

Nigel just hadn't thought specifically about the where.

And then the girl sat forward, poking her head between them to say, "New York. We're going to New York."

One Year Later

"Hey gorgeous."

Buddy started slightly and then blinked his eyes open at the murmuring against his ear. He hated that even these many months later he was still so easily startled. Especially when it came to Nigel, who treated him with nothing but gentle care. But the fear he'd developed in the centre was deeply ingrained and he wasn't sure it would ever entirely leave him.

Buddy winced and this discomfort was replaced by a physical one that settled through his entire body. He groaned and sat up in the chair, feeling the numbness of the side of his face where he'd fallen asleep with his face planted on a textbook, again.

"Time for bed," Nigel urged him and then pulled him up from the chair. It scraped across the floor and Buddy would have protested that the neighbours would be pissed, but he was too busy enjoying being manhandled by Nigel.

He would never get over the comfort and warmth he experienced being held in Nigel's arms.

The first time he'd felt it was in the car on their way to New York. A little passed New Haven Gabi took over driving, knowing the way to Ann's. It allowed the two of them to get into the back of the car and let Nigel hold Buddy.

It wasn't until they had been in New York a couple of weeks and Nigel suggested the move to San Francisco, that Buddy realised how skittish he'd actually become. The thought of moving somewhere new was terrifying. Especially as they'd been sleeping on Gabi and Ann's couch and he would miss the understanding that he had from Gabi.

But the move was for the best. Nigel's friend Darko had connections there and was able to set Nigel up with a good auto mechanic job. When they arrived, Buddy took a job in a bookshop

and started night school. They even had their own place. It was small, with a double bed behind a curtain that separated it from the rest of the apartment. But it was in as safe a neighbourhood they'd get, with lots of other homosexuals, a few beat nights nearby. They sometimes went to the Black Cat Bar when Buddy was feeling brave enough to be around crowds.

It felt good to be in a place where people could openly be themselves and not be the outcasts. But there was always that slight fear that they might be there during a police raid and his family would find him, he'd end up back in the centre, or somewhere equally hellish.

"You can study more tomorrow." Nigel reminded him as he carried Buddy to their bed. Buddy smiled and snuggled closer even as Nigel tried to put him down.

When Nigel placed him on the bed, Buddy didn't let go, pulling Nigel down with him.

"Aren't you too tired, darling?" Nigel crooned against his ear even as he dropped between Buddy's legs.

Buddy shivered at the sensation of Nigel over him, always did. Always would.

There was a part of him that was never going to believe this wasn't a dream and he might wake at any minute.

The way Nigel worshipped him didn't make it any easier to believe.

So Buddy could only resolve to allow the dream to continue unquestioned and hope it never ended.

"I am," Buddy responded, his words breathy. "You'll have to do all the work."

Nigel chuckled, "Is that so?"

Buddy bit on his lower lip as Nigel moved, practised now. They had spent their early days in San Francisco exploring every inch of each other in a cheap hotel where the clerk had given them a friendly smile and turned a blind eye. After nights on end in New York with no privacy to even talk about what this was between them, words became redundant. They barely left the room until Nigel had to start work a week later at his new job. A month later they were in their apartment.

And this was far from the first time Buddy had requested sleepy sex. Whether after an evening at a bar, or more likely studying at home, or perhaps in the morning. Waking with the sun so he could have Nigel fuck him before they had to go to work.

"I'll never know how I got so lucky," Nigel murmured against Buddy's stomach as he pushed up his shirt.

Buddy sighed and relaxed back against the pillows, completely pliant as Nigel undressed him with tender care.

He ignored Buddy's heavy cock when he removed his pants. And once Buddy was completely naked, Nigel rolled him onto his front and stepped from the bed to remove his own clothes.

Buddy hummed his contentment and snuggled into the pillow, bringing one leg up the bed to open himself to Nigel.

That pulled a groan from his lover and was followed by a dip in the bed and a swipe of the tongue.

Buddy sucked in a sharp breath and let out a quiet moan as Nigel tongued at his hole. He was still loose enough from the night before, and incredibly sensitive. His cock was leaking against the sheets when Nigel pulled back and reached over to the nightstand.

He grabbed the crisco and a minute later pushed two fingers into Buddy.

It wasn't preparation so much as a tease. He eased them in and out, grazing Buddy's prostate and making him writhe. His hips bucked against the bed for the friction against his own cock, but he made no other move to participate. He still planned to just have Nigel lull him to sleep with a gentle fuck.

Buddy moaned again, this time with an edge to it that he knew Nigel would correctly interpret it as impatience.

The fingers were gone and Buddy could hear Nigel stroking his own cock, just before the tip pressed against his hole.

Buddy sighed and let his body relax completely as Nigel moved forward. He lay down, half-spooning, half-blanketing Buddy as he slid into him. Nigel pushed Buddy's leg up a little more and then stopped, completely enveloped within him they both breathed together for a minute. Savouring the connection.

When Nigel finally moved it was slow. Restricted by their position, Nigel was only able to pull back a little, relying on moving his hips rather than pumping in and out of him. And Buddy loved it.

He loved when Nigel fucked him hard over their couch or pressed against the wall. He loved it when he buried himself inside Nigel and watched the desperation on his lover's face as he jerked himself in time with Buddy's thrusts.

But this was his favourite. There never felt like a more intimate connection than when they were joined together in this way, moving slowly towards climax, because that wasn't the important part. They would both come eventually, but in the meantime they would enjoy the feeling of being wholly entwined with each other.

Nigel's hand slid under him and began to rub over Buddy's nipple, pulling whimpers and causing his hips to jerk until Nigel didn't need to move at all.

“I thought I was going to do all the work,” Nigel breathed against his ear and Buddy could only whimper again in response.

A lot of the time when they did this, Buddy lay still and let Nigel worship him. Most of the time he would come against the sheets and then either jerk Nigel off or, if Buddy was already nodding off, Nigel would take care of himself.

But Buddy wanted more.

Maybe it was because he’d fallen asleep studying but everything was more dreamlike than normal. Whilst he knew that everything would still be this hesitant and unique form of perfection that’d found together when they woke the next morning, he needed to savour it in that moment.

“Inside me,” Buddy moaned. “Come, please…”

Nigel moaned in response and undulated his hips a little more, meeting Buddy’s own movements.

The position, the way the sheets bunched beneath him, had Buddy trembling.

His orgasm hit him hard and suddenly. He cried out as he spilled all over the sheets, creating a sticky wet mess and nearly sobbing as he did so.

Nigel grunted as Buddy tightened around him, and then started to pull back.

Buddy moaned again. Nigel knew his body so well, knew that he’d be sensitive after coming, and so Nigel pulled back behind him and his cock almost all the way out.

Buddy took shuddering breaths as Nigel stroked his cock, rough and quick, with the head still in Buddy’s asshole.

“Oh god,” Buddy shook and clutched at the pillow, trying to widen his legs a little more as the slick sounds of Nigel’s movements echoed around their small apartment.

“Buddy, I love you… Fuck gorgeous, I love you so much.” Nigel growled the words as he came, continuing to fuck into his fist and into Buddy’s rim as he came inside him as requested.

Buddy sobbed, then sighed and shook for a moment before relaxing back into the bed.

Nigel panted for a moment and then pressed forward again, so slowly, so gently. Until he was hilted once more completely inside Buddy, the way eased all the more by his own come. And once more he contentedly snuggled against Buddy’s back.

Buddy clenched around him, pulling a grunt from Nigel. And then they both settled as Nigel softened within him and his come started to leak out.

It was a messy night, but sometimes Buddy needed it to be. They would bathe and clean the sheets in the morning. For now he would sleep with Nigel still connected entirely to him,

knowing he was safe in his arms.

“I love you too,” Buddy replied sleepily, snuggling more into the pillow as Nigel pressed closer against him. He fell asleep with Nigel wrapped around him.

Safe and sound.

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